



SOIL AND WATER *Resources*

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Pilot Session Completed for Technician Certification Testing

On Sept. 25, Lincoln University's Carver Farm in Jefferson City hosted the first testing session for technician II certification, and 11 technicians passed and are baseline certified. These districts received an increase in their personnel grant. The salary allocation for all certified technicians is based on \$13.35 per hour. Lincoln University conducted a pilot test of approximately 26 technicians before making it available for all technicians.

Certified technicians scored 70 percent or higher in all four areas of the test. The four areas included soils, surveying, conservation planning and conservation practices. As a group, 96 percent of all technicians passed the soils portion, 61 percent passed the survey portion, 81 percent passed the conservation planning section and 69 percent passed the conservation practices section. Overall, 42 percent of the technicians passed the first version of the test. Lincoln University will be making adjustments to the test before the next session.

Lincoln University developed the test to assess the skill level and training needs of current technicians related to the technician II certification. If a technician meets the skill level, the technician will be certified in the baseline conservation practices, thus becoming a technician II. If the skill level is not met, the technician may attend training to obtain the necessary skills. Lincoln University received support from NRCS, retired NRCS employees, Lincoln University professors and program staff to develop the test questions.

The test questions relate to the technician's knowledge of the Soil and Water Districts Commission policies and NRCS standards and specifications for the following practices: DSL-1, DSL-2, DSP-2, MDSP-2, DFR-4, DFR-5, N472, N386, N393, N391, N380, N725, N574, N351 and WQ10. All technicians receiving baseline certification are able to certify these practices. For technicians not currently involved with Agricultural Nonpoint Source Special Area Land Treatment practices, there is a copy of Section III of the AgNPS Handbook on the SWCD Intranet page (www.swcd.mo.gov/internal/sp.htm) under the Handbooks link that contains the commission's policies for the AgNPS practices.

The test assesses the technician's knowledge and skills of the following items:

- Seeding Rates and Mixtures
- Buffers and Fences
- Soils
- Communication Skills
- Surveying Techniques
- Customer Service/Marketing
- Soil and Water Districts Commission Practice Policies
- Conservation Planning
- DGLS Well Decommissioning
- Pipeline
- Introduction to Conservation Forestry Planning
- RUSLE2 (Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation – 2nd version)
- WEPS (Wind Erosion Prediction System)
- NRCS-MOCPA-52 (Environmental Evaluation Worksheet)
- WIN-PST (Windows Pesticide Screening Tool)



Missouri Department
of Natural Resources
Soil and Water Conservation Program

Another e-mail will be sent in the future to get a comprehensive list of all the technicians that wish to participate in the technician II certification process. Testing for the rest of the technicians is planned for Nov. 4, 5 and 13 at Carver Farm. After all the technicians interested in taking the test have completed it, Lincoln University will develop a training guide for the technicians that did not meet the technician II baseline certification.

The program office will cover the travel expenses for technicians to attend the testing sessions. If you have questions, please contact your district coordinator.

Needs Assessment Meetings Held Throughout the State

The department recently held nine meetings across the state to provide districts with more information as they start to work on their first needs assessment draft. While a few technicalities still need to be figured out, here are the main points that districts should take away from the meetings.

One of the first things discussed was the importance of having a needs assessment completed by each local soil and water conservation district. The assessment will serve as a resource to provide accurate information to support proposed legislation in making the cost-share program practices not only address soil erosion, but also protect water quality concerns. Another important point is that the needs assessment will give the districts the opportunity to provide information to help the commission properly allocate the FY10 cost-share funds. For the first time in over 10 years, cost-share will be based upon district need and not past usage.

And finally, in looking at some of the long term benefits of doing this planning, the information provided will allow the department to provide performance objectives for appropriation requests in addition to planning for the tax renewal efforts for 2016. The needs assessment will provide supporting documentation of the conservation work that still needs to be done with the parks, soils and water sales tax.

In past renewal efforts, most of the information provided centered around past accomplishments. While that information was invaluable, there were also many questions posed on future needs that could have been addressed through information contained in the needs assessment.

Staff appreciates the districts' support in completing the needs assessment. The preliminary draft will need to be done late December with the final needs assessment due early March. Staff is available to help the district and the boards understand more details of the needs assessment if necessary.

Implementation Date for New Accounting Program Pushed Back

Last May, memo 2008-034 discussed the new Web-based accounting program being developed for MoSWIMS. In the memo, the department projected an implementation date of Oct. 1, 2008. The implementation date has been pushed back. The accounting program is currently being tested by program office staff to ensure it meets our expectations. After staff has tested the system and is satisfied that all accounting requirements are met, pilot districts will test and review the system as well.

Some features being programmed into the system include not designating whether to debit or credit an account number, submitting the quarterly report electronically, storing receipts in the system and not having to mail copies to the program office. Another feature is that reports can be run for any date range and are not limited to the fiscal year. As we get closer to completing the testing and get some districts to review the program, we will notify everyone of training dates prior to the new implementation date.

New Planning Tool for Technicians Will Help in Designing Conservation Practices

The Conservation Management Tool Web site is designed to aid district technicians in planning cost-share conservation practices. The password protected site allows users to plan practices by drawing them out on aerial photography. District technicians can then associate cost-share components and standards and specifications to the different practice features. The site will also generate a practice plan report listing the landowner information, practice feature information, technician's notes, associated standards and specifications, planned cost-share components, a practice map and soils information for the farm where the practice is planned. The practice plan report will also have a signature page for the landowner, technician and board signatures. District technicians will be able to submit the information and return to it at any time for updates, edits or revisions to the practice. At the program office each coordinator will have access to their assigned county's practice plans. When the MoSWIMS contracts for the practice plans are submitted for approval, the coordinator will be able to view the practice plan report from the CMT Web site expediting the pre-approval process. Training on the new CMT Web site for district technicians took place in October.

Update on Department Memos

Here is a summary of each memo that was sent out from the program office since September's newsletter. The full version of each memo is available at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/swcp/correspondence.htm. If you have any questions, please contact your district coordinator or the Soil and Water Conservation Program, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO, 65102-0176 or by phone at 573-751-4932.

Memo 2009-005 Program Office

Updates Cost-Share Policy on Clearing

Site clearing is no longer considered starting a practice when it is determined to be technically necessary in order to survey and design a cost-share practice. The clearing of these sites will help administratively streamline the cost-share process by allowing districts to enter accurate approved extents for planned components on the original contracts, thereby reducing the number of change orders needed. A conservation plan must be approved and on file in the district office before the landowner can begin clearing. Cost-share payment for the clearing component may be paid to the landowner upon certification that the completed practice meets NRCS standards and specifications, and the contract payment is approved by the district board of supervisors.

Prior to implementation, district boards should discuss and develop written policies for administering the availability of cost-share funds for the completion of these practices. Many boards may wish to continue the practice of not cost-sharing on the site clearing component.

Memo 2009-006 Policy Revisions for DWC-I Water Impoundment Reservoir Practice Effective Oct. 1, 2008

The Soil and Water Districts Commission approved the following clarifications and revisions in the policy for the DWC-I Water Impoundment Reservoir practice. These changes went into effect on all new contracts approved after Oct. 1, 2008. These changes in policy were made by the commission to reduce liability on the larger structures and reduce the perception that the parks, soils and water sales tax is being used in some instances to construct ponds for recreational or aesthetic purposes. Also, the DWC-I practice costs taxpayers approximately twice as much per ton of soil saved as the next highest cost for a regular cost-share practice. The revisions and clarifications in policy for this practice are as follows:

- Structures with an overall dam height of 25 feet or more with a storage volume of at least 50 acre-feet of water are not eligible for state cost-share.

For purposes of this definition, the height of the dam is measured either from the natural bed of the stream or watercourse at the downstream toe of the barrier or dam, or the lowest point on the downstream toe of the dam, whichever is lower, up to the lowest dam crest elevation. The storage volume is the amount of water stored in the reservoir below the dam crest elevation. Information on how to measure a dam can be found on the Web at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wrc/damsft/damhgt.htm.

- The reference to silvicultural nonpoint sources of erosion have been removed from the purpose statement. Ponds can no longer be approved for erosion control in forested areas except in woody draws impacted by crop and pasture fields. Forested areas are defined in this policy, as shown on the latest available aerial map, as tree canopy completely covering the proposed pond site. Heavy clearing is not an approved component for this practice because it is to be used for extensive woody removal and it increases the cost of this practice. Medium clearing is eligible for moderate woody removal. Any structure site cleared by the landowner prior to contract application (not contract approval) is not eligible for cost-share.
- Construction of a DWC-I is prohibited unless agricultural activity is surrounding the structure site.

Memo 2009-007 Vegetative Establishment, Herbaceous Seeding (723) Standard

NRCS initially revised the Herbaceous Seeding (723) in September 2007 with the new liming requirements. On April 15, 2008, NRCS issued Missouri Bulletin No. M0180-8-5 concerning the Vegetation Establishment, Herbaceous Seeding (723) specification which applies to the Soil and Water Conservation Program. If the seeding practice was planned and a JS-AGRON-25 created for the practice, the version of the conservation practice in effect on the date of the job sheet completion will be the version of the standard that may be followed in the installation of the practice. Thus, if a landowner did not have a cost-share application approved but did have the practice planned and job sheet completed by NRCS prior to July 1, 2008, the district can use the prior specification. Should there be other concerns that are not covered by this bulletin, please refer to the Missouri NRCS Variance Policy concerning seedings. Requests for variances should be initiated by the local District Conservationist through proper channels to Bob Ball, State Resource Conservationist. Districts are encouraged to work through NRCS to resolve issues with implementing this standard.

Memo 2009-008 Commission Increases the Practice Maximum for the DWC-I Water Impoundment Reservoir Practice to \$10,000 Effective Oct. 1, 2008

The Soil and Water Districts Commission voted to increase the practice maximum for the DWC-I (Water Impoundment Reservoir) practice to \$10,000. This went into effect Oct. 1, 2008. The practice maximum was increased in part, due to the high cost of materials and labor to construct this practice.

The \$8,250 program office maximum will remain on contracts it was associated to before being made inactive, but will no longer be a choice as a program office maximum on new contracts. District boards that want to limit cost-share on this practice to an amount less than \$10,000 after Oct. 1, can enter a district office practice maximum into MoSWIMS. Some boards may also wish to consider making the effective date July 1, 2009, to allow all landowners to be eligible to receive the same cost-share amount for this practice this fiscal year. The practice maximum for existing contracts that have been board approved but the landowner has not yet started the practice may be increased through a change order.

Memo 2009-009 Commission Improves a Buffer Sinkhole Improvement Incentive to Protect Groundwater for Cape Girardeau, Perry and Ste. Genevieve Counties Effective Oct. 1, 2008

The Soil and Water Districts Commission voted to approve an incentive practice used for continuing protection of sinkholes that have been stabilized using the DSP-31 Sinkhole Improvement to Control Gully Erosion practice. This incentive is applicable to sinkholes in which the 10-year maintenance agreement has expired. The incentive practice will allow landowners to receive \$300 to maintain or re-establish a 25-foot minimum buffer surrounding the sinkhole and will include 10-year maintenance of the site. This practice will be available only in Cape Girardeau, Perry and Ste. Genevieve counties. This was effective as of Oct. 1, 2008.

Researcher from University Gives Final Report on Terrace System to Commission

Dr. Clark Gantzer from the University of Missouri-Columbia presented a final report on a commission approved research project, "A Feasibility Study of the Use of Computer-Assisted Terrace Design for Missouri" at the Sept. 17 meeting. Dr. Gantzer and colleagues along with the USDA-NRCS Missouri state office collaborated to develop an Internet-based computer-assisted terrace design system for use by NRCS employees and private contractors, along with farmers. This tool is in the initial phases of development. The system uses

topographic data, geographic information systems, the Internet, terrace design programs and desktop computers to develop alternative conventional and parallel terrace layouts. The various layouts consider equipment, practices, soil loss, waterway locations, terrace spacing and cost for determination of the best design. This terrace design system will enable better use of conservation cost-share by facilitating more timely development of certified terrace systems with improved farmability.

Department Requests Comments from Districts on Policy Changes to the DSP-3 Practice

District comments are underway on policy changes to the DSP-3 Grazing System Practice. Nine positive regional meetings were held in September to promote discussion about revamping policy to create a practice that is easier for districts to administer, more flexible for producers and focused on environmental benefits for Missouri taxpayers. Proposed policy establishes a per acre limit for components needed to establish or improve a grazing system (such as fence, water distribution, water supply, lime, seed, nutrient management and pest management). A survey, which records and compiles comments from districts on policy questions, is on the SWCD Intranet, www.swcd.mo.gov/internal/sp.htm, and will be available through Oct. 31. **Please complete only one survey per district.** The survey will be used to make changes to the DSP-3 policy, which will be presented to the commission for approval.

Updates on Proposed Rule Changes for Equipment Rebates and the Cost-Share Process

The department filed the Equipment Rebate Rule (10 CSR 70-9.010) with the Secretary of State's Office for public comment on Aug. 15, 2008. It is currently in the Missouri Register (33 MoReg 1722). The order of rulemaking should be filed with the Secretary of State in January and will be effective by March 2009. This rule establishes Soil and Water Districts Commission guidelines for use and availability of the department's Conservation Equipment Incentive Program which will replace the Loan Interest-Share Program. This rule outlines applicant eligibility, application approval and establishes equipment eligibility. The rule was written to provide a framework for the program to allow for flexibility in procedures while following commission priorities. Eligible producers will receive a rebate payment on new or used eligible equipment purchased from an equipment dealer. The rebate amount will be a percentage of the purchase price as established by the commission.

The program is also working on amendments to cost-share rules 10 CSR 70-5.04 and 10 CSR 70-8.04 for procedural changes to allow cost-share payments to be based upon estimated rather than actual costs. This was filed with the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules on Sept. 16. There is a 30-day waiting period before we can file these amendments with the Secretary of State. These two amendments should become effective by Jan. 30, 2009.

Amendments are also being made to 10 CSR 70.4.01 which adds definitions for the Department of Natural Resources, estimated approved costs, and job approval authority and replaces the Soil Conservation Service with U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. Other amendments to the cost-share rules are in development but are on hold until the original rule is approved.

Three Former Soil Scientists are Added to the Program Office Staff

Recently, the soil science section within the Soil and Water Conservation Program was dissolved. The department's Human Resources Program has helped these employees find new positions within the department that will benefit from their skills. We have also been working with other state agencies, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and our 114 soil and water conservation districts that may possibly offer career opportunities for these employees. Currently, 13 of 16 have found new positions.



Amber Marshaus

The department reassigned three former soil scientists for positions within the program office. Amber Marshaus, Jennifer Pellett and Leon Thompson have all accepted positions within the special projects and the district support units.

Marshaus was a soil scientist in Macon for the past three years but is now the district coordinator for the north central part of the state. Originally from Franklin County, Marshaus has a degree from Southeast Missouri State University with a double major in environmental science and geoscience. She is currently working on her master's degree in soil science from the University of Missouri in Columbia. "While it will definitely be different sitting at a desk rather than being in the field, I am looking forward to working with the soil and water districts that I am responsible for, assisting district boards with their policies and getting more involved with the cost-share process," said Marshaus. In her free time, Marshaus enjoys staying active by running and teaching yoga.



Jennifer Pellett

For the past two and a half years, Pellett was a soil scientist in Poplar Bluff although she was born and raised in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Bedford, Virginia. She has a degree in biology and a minor in chemistry from Virginia Tech and will receive her graduate degree in geology and a minor in soils from Southeast Missouri State University this December. Pellett will be the new district coordinator for a portion of the southeast part of the state. "It will definitely be a change from being in the field, but I'm looking forward to my new responsibilities," said Pellett. "I enjoy working with the districts and am here to help." Pellett currently resides in Stoddard County and enjoys being a 4H assistant with her equestrian club, camping, trail riding, horse showing and helping her husband with their 80 acres and their Angus cattle. She is also excited about becoming a new mom in January.



Leon Thompson

Thompson was also a soil scientist in the southeast region for the past 15 years. He helped complete two county soil surveys in Shannon and Reynolds. He is a graduate of Missouri State University with a degree agriculture education. Thompson previously worked as a teacher and then as a district technician for Shannon County prior to being hired by the soil science section of the program office. Thompson will be an environmental specialist with the special projects unit responsible for all AgNPS SALT projects in the southern part of the state. "I'm ready to learn more about the cost-share and SALT practices and how they work together," said Thompson. "I'm also excited to see what the districts do with the soils maps that we made." Thompson currently resides on a farm outside Birch Tree in Shannon County. His main enjoyment is taking care of his small beef cattle farm and visiting Branson with his wife.



Commission Partners with Others to Study Irrigation Practices in Southwest Missouri

The Soil and Water Districts Commission has become a partner in a regional effort to learn how irrigation practices affect water resources in southwest Missouri for 10 watersheds within 11 counties. Impaired water quality, inadequate groundwater recharge, urban competition for water resources and high energy costs are issues irrigators are facing. Supply of water in Missouri generally is adequate to meet withdrawal demands, although water supply in southwest Missouri is becoming a concern. The Southwest Missouri Irrigation Water Management Project sponsored by the Southwest Missouri Resource Conservation and Development will assist irrigators with the project. Water meters for irrigation wells will be provided through the project, with installation costs incurred by the irrigator. This will help irrigators better understand their water usage for planning purposes and will help understand the impacts to the groundwater aquifers. A pilot project through the Department of Natural Resources' Water Resources Center will establish specifications for meters, installation and reporting. Irrigators will register as major water users (www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wrc/waterusestatutes.htm), report usage monthly and follow an Irrigation Water Management

Plan. Following the pilot project, water meters, project administration and monitoring of nutrients in soils and streams will be funded through the department's Section 319 Nonpoint Source Implementation Program. Water quality for the project will be addressed by assisting irrigators with funding for irrigation management practices and for nutrient and pest management. Funding will be provided through Special Area Land Treatment funds through soil and water conservation districts and from NRCS EQIP funds to producers. The Southwest Missouri Irrigators Association hosted a meeting in late August to promote the project to their members and is proactively seeking solutions to water quantity and quality issues in the area. The project is in the initial stages with additional partners anticipated.

Half of the Districts are Utilizing the Free Web Sites Offered by the Department

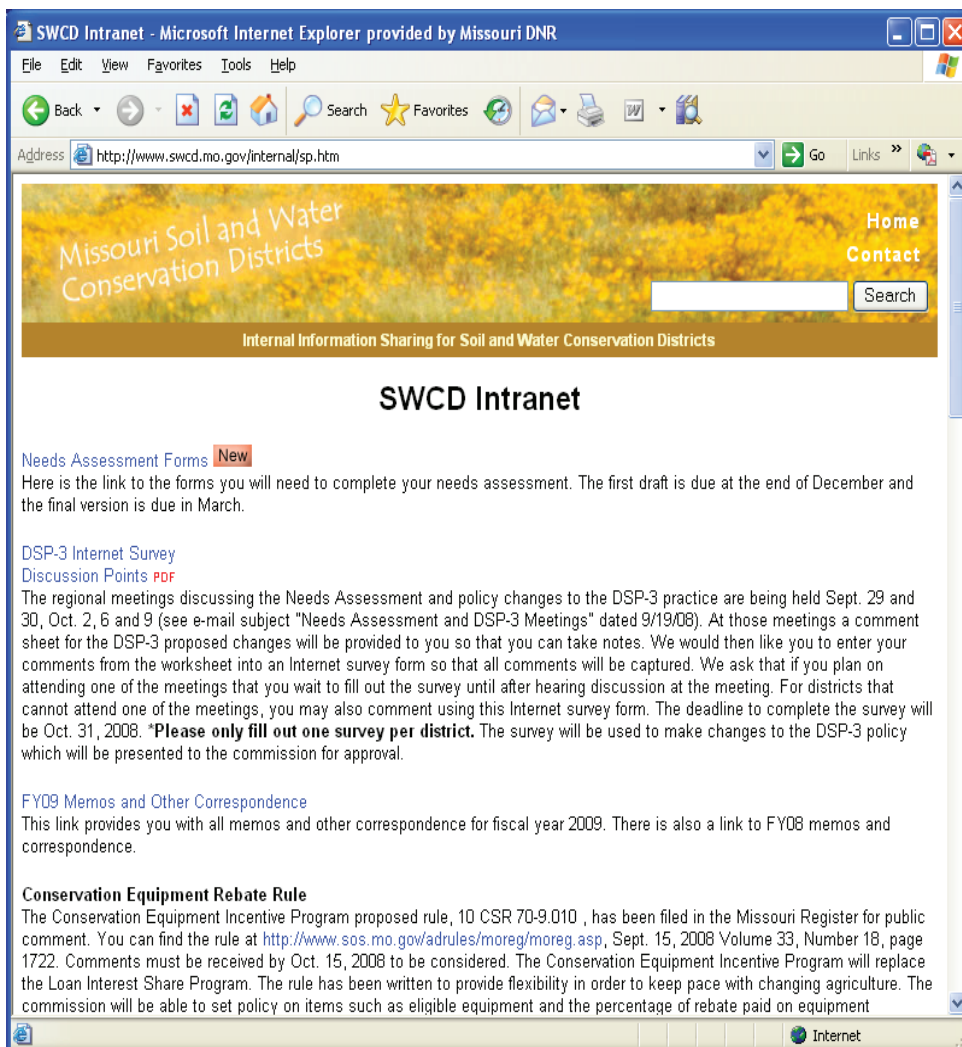
Only 57 of 114 soil and water conservation districts have posted something to their free Web sites offered by the department at www.swcd.mo.gov/. While this is a good start, the department would like to encourage each district to post information. The Internet is a great resource for the public to find out information on soil and water conservation programs in their area. By not posting anything to your site, you are missing out on a free opportunity to market your programs to landowners.

Training on Contribute, the Web software used to make updates to pages, was offered last spring in conjunction with Missouri Soil and Water Information Management training. If you were unable to make the training or would like to brush up on the instructions, they are available on the SWCD Intranet site, www.swcd.mo.gov/internal/sp.htm, at the bottom under Basic Computer Information. There is also a new PowerPoint presentation, Web Tips and Tricks, available as well. If you are currently listed as the Web maintainer for your district and you would like to get that switched to someone else, please contact the department's Web staff, Debbie Boeckman, Paul Schelich, Tricia Helton or Renee Williams, at 800-361-4827.

If you have other Web questions, please contact the Web staff or Jessica Royston, public information specialist for the program office, at 573-751-1373.

Soil and Water Intranet Site is a Great Resource for Districts

All soil and water conservation districts have access to the soil and water districts Intranet site at www.swcd.mo.gov/internal/sp.htm. This is an internal site designed specifically for the department to post information pertinent to districts. Currently, the Intranet site should be set up as each district employee's homepage when they first open Internet Explorer. If this is not the case, please send a help desk ticket to have each district computer's homepage open to the Intranet site.



Some of the information will change periodically while things such as links to the memos, handbooks and forms will stay constant. Please check this page regularly for the most current information. This is another tool that the department is using to communicate more effectively with the soil and water conservation districts.

MASWCD Hosts 2008 Training Conference At Tan-Tar-A in December

The Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts will host the 2008 Soil and Water Conservation Districts Training Conference, Dec. 1-3, 2008, at Tan-Tar-A Resort in Osage Beach.

There will be a variety of workshops offered. Opening session begins at 7 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 1. There will be a special door prize given at this session, but you must be present to win. The MASWCD business meeting will be on Tuesday morning, as well as the District Employees Association business meeting. District Employees Association awards will be presented at the Tuesday luncheon. The MASWCD awards will be presented at the Tuesday banquet. Following those awards, Bill Schott, an Elvis impersonator will perform his show, "Tribute to Elvis." Schott has finished in the top five in the international "Image of Elvis" competition in Memphis. After workshops on Wednesday morning, there will be a wrap-up session where attendees can give input as to how they feel the conference met their needs and offer suggestions for future conferences. Registration and conference information is available online at www.maswcd.net.



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